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Report of the Human Rights Council

Programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007

Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009

Revised estimates relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 and to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 under sections 2, 23, 27, 28E and 35 and income section 1 and proposal related to unforeseen and extraordinary expenses arising from the implementation of decisions of the Human Rights Council

Twenty-sixth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 and to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 under sections 2, 23, 27, 28E and 35 and income section 1 and proposal related to unforeseen and extraordinary expenses arising from the implementation of decisions of the Human Rights Council (A/62/125). During its consideration of the report, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarifications.

2. In its resolution 60/251, the General Assembly decided to establish the Human Rights Council, based in Geneva, in replacement of the Commission on Human Rights, as a subsidiary organ of the Assembly and decided, inter alia, that the Council shall undertake a universal periodic review, based on objective and reliable information, of the fulfilment by each State of its human rights obligations and commitments, and assume, review and, where necessary, improve and rationalize all

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mandates, mechanisms, functions and responsibilities of the Commission on Human Rights in order to maintain a system of special procedures, expert advice and a complaint procedure. The Assembly also decided that the Council "shall meet regularly throughout the year and schedule no fewer than three sessions per year, including a main session, for a total duration of no less than 10 weeks, and shall be able to hold special sessions, when needed, at the request of a member of the Council with the support of one third of the membership of the Council.

II. Revised estimates

3. The revised estimates in document A/62/125 are submitted in response to Human Rights Council decision 3/104, by which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session on ways and means to guarantee to the Council the provision of: (a) conference services; (b) webcast transmission; (c) translation of documentation; and (d) adequate funding for unforeseen and extraordinary expenses arising from the implementation of the Council's decisions. The Advisory Committee has commented in its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 on the timing of the submission of the revised estimates, noting that Human Rights Council decision 3/104 was adopted on 8 December 2006, and on the need to avoid a piecemeal approach to budgeting (see A/62/7, para. VI.4).

4. Estimated additional requirements arising from Human Rights Council decision 3/104 total $8,057,000, as follows:

(a) A total of $4,351,500 for the biennium 2006-2007, comprising (i) $3,792,100 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, of the programme budget, (ii) $190,700 under section 27, Public information, (iii) $291,600 under section 28E, Administration, Geneva, and (iv) $77,100 under section 35, Staff assessment;

(b) A total of $3,705,500 (before recosting) for the biennium 2008-2009, comprising (i) $1,019,700 for section 23, Human rights, of the proposed programme budget, (ii) $1,356,800 under section 27, Public information, (iii) $952,100 under section 28E, Administration, Geneva, and (iv) $376,900 under section 35, Staff assessment.

A. Proposals by budget section

1. Section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management

5. As indicated in paragraph 9 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/125), it is projected that, as from 2007, the Human Rights Council will hold an additional 10 weeks of meetings per year for a total of 20 weeks of meetings per year. For 2006-2007, a one-time requirement of $3,792,100 is estimated to supplement resources for temporary assistance for meetings for the projected additional 10 weeks of meetings in 2007. It is proposed that the additional amount be accommodated within approved available resources under section 2 and reported in the context of the second performance report for the biennium 2006-2007. **The Advisory Committee has no objection to this course of action**. The Committee

notes that in the second performance report, reduced requirements of $15.4 million are reported for section 2 (see A/62/575, schedule 1).

6. As indicated in paragraph 13 of the report of the Secretary-General, for 2008-2009, it is anticipated that additional requirements under section 2 would result in net zero growth against the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009. The proposal includes an increase of 27 Professional posts (12 P-5, 7 P-4, 8 P-3), offset by the abolition of 12 General Service (Other level) posts and reflects the strengthening and realignment of the meetings and documentation management functions under conference management, Geneva, as well as a change in working methods. The Advisory Committee points out that while the proposal is cost-neutral for 2008-2009, as it stands, it would entail additional requirements for the biennium 2010-2011 estimated at $4,465,900 owing to the delayed impact of the 27 new posts proposed.

7. The establishment of a P-5 post is proposed for the Chief of the Meetings Management Section in view of the increased meetings workload for conference services at Geneva resulting from the expansion of the conference activities of the Human Rights Council. **The Advisory Committee is not convinced that the additional workload creates a new function that merits the establishment of a P-5 post. The Committee therefore recommends against approval of a P-5 post for the Chief of the Meetings Management Section.**

8. In paragraph 13 of the report of the Secretary-General, 20 new posts (6 P-5, 6 P-4, 8 P-3) are proposed for one additional team of interpreters. Upon enquiry as to the basis for the request for 20 interpreters, the Advisory Committee was informed that 4 interpreters each were included for Arabic and Chinese, taking into account language specificities,[1] and 3 each for English, French, Russian and Spanish. Geneva currently had four teams of interpreters on established posts under the regular budget, which are supplemented with freelancers. The Committee was further informed that while the number of freelancers available in the local market in Geneva was comparatively higher than at other duty stations, the demand had also increased, with competition from specialized agencies, programmes and other organizations for the same pool of freelance interpreters, a problem which was especially acute since some sessions of the Human Rights Council overlapped with large meetings, such as the International Labour Conference and the World Health Assembly. Moreover, many of the available freelancers had already accepted contracts from organizations with established meeting dates and thus would not be available on short notice to service the additional meetings of the Council. Given the lack of local resources, the Organization could be forced to recruit non-local freelancers, which would be costly in that it would entail travel, per diem and terminal expenses. **For the reasons given by the Secretary-General, as well as those cited above, the Advisory Committee is of the view that the case has been made for the establishment of one additional team of interpreters in Geneva. It**

[1] Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that Arabic and Chinese interpreters are required to work both from and into their main language. For example, when a speech is delivered in Arabic or Chinese, the interpreter will provide official interpretation into another official language (usually English or French), which the other booths will use as the source language. In order to provide the necessary coverage, three interpreters work in the booth at a time for Arabic and Chinese, as compared to two interpreters at a time for English, French, Russian and Spanish.

therefore recommends approval of the additional 6 P-5, 6 P-4 and 8 P-3 posts requested for one additional team of interpreters.

9. As part of the proposal, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management intends to increase its reliance on contractual translation in Geneva as a more cost-effective mode of translating certain types of documents and to address the increased documentation workload (see A/62/125, para. 13). To this end, the Secretary-General proposes the redeployment of $2,100,000 in temporary assistance resources to contractual translation, as well as the establishment of one new P-4 post for the Chief of the Contractual Translation Unit and the establishment of five P-5 posts for Senior Revisers to ensure "appropriate quality control as a result of increased reliance on external translations, in accordance with section V, paragraph 10, of General Assembly resolution 61/236" (A/62/125, para. 13 (b) (ii)). The proposal also reflects reduced requirements under temporary assistance resources ($1,414,000) resulting from the realignment between temporary assistance for meetings and established capacity. As indicated in paragraph 14 of the report, cost avoidance of $969,200 is anticipated as a result of the changes to working methods.

10. **With the still relatively low volume of contractual translation in Geneva, the Advisory Committee believes that a new P-4 post for the Chief of the Contractual Translation Unit is not yet required. It therefore recommends against the establishment of a new P-4 post for the Chief of the Unit.**

11. As to the five P-5 senior reviser posts requested, the Advisory Committee notes that this is the third such request. The Committee has commented in detail concerning the requests in the proposed programme budget for seven new P-5 Senior Reviser posts for New York and five new P-4 Reviser posts in Vienna (see A/62/7, paras. I.23-I.27). The Committee has also commented on the fact that the United Nations Office at Geneva, with its projection for 2008-2009 of 12 per cent contractual translation and 5 per cent off-site translation, had not taken advantage of the savings possible through external translation (see A/62/7, para. I.51). The Committee encourages the further development of contractual translation in Geneva as a more cost-effective mode of translating certain types of documents and to address the increased documentation workload. It notes, however, from additional information provided to it that, although the number of words to be translated contractually in 2008-2009 would increase from a projected 11,900,000 in the original budget submission to 21,700,000 under the revised estimates, overall contractual translation is projected to increase only to 16 per cent, while off-site translation will actually decrease to 3 per cent.

12. **The Advisory Committee underlines the importance of quality control for contractual translation (see A/60/7, para. I.60).** Upon request, the Committee was provided with generic job descriptions of P-5 and P-4 Reviser posts. The P-5 Senior Reviser post has, as one of its functions, the revision of translations and original summary records "dealing with subjects of an exceptionally sensitive, complex or technical nature", while the P-4 Reviser post "revises translations and original summary records dealing with a broad range of subjects dealt with by the United Nations". The Committee was informed that it was intended that urgent, politically sensitive translations would be done by more experienced, in-house translators, while lengthy documents with longer lead times would be handled by contractual translators. **The Committee considers that the question of the appropriate grade**

level for revisers for quality control of contractual translation should be kept under review.

13. **In the view of the Advisory Committee, the need for quality control and the consequent request for additional resources at three duty stations for revisers and senior revisers raises the question of how best this function might be handled, taking into account the overall capacity of the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management. The Committee therefore recommends that the Department explore all viable options for quality control of contractual translation and report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session.**

14. **Pending such an analysis, the Advisory Committee recommends approval, at this stage, of temporary assistance resources equivalent to five P-5 positions for revisers at the United Nations Office at Geneva.**

2. Section 23, Human rights

15. Additional requirements for the biennium 2008-2009 under section 23, Human Rights, are estimated at $1,019,700, as follows: travel of representatives to attend sessions of the Human Rights Council ($94,400); five new Professional posts ($749,000); furniture and equipment ($20,800); general temporary assistance ($57,200); overtime ($10,400) and travel of staff ($87,900).

16. Five new posts (2 P-4, 2 P-3 and 1 P-2) are requested from 1 January 2008 to support the Human Rights Council. As noted in paragraph 30 of the report of the Secretary-General, this would be in addition to the proposed establishment, in a phased manner, of 36 new posts under the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009. Four posts (1 P-4, 2 P-3 and 1 P-2) are requested for Human Rights Officers to reinforce the Support and Coordination Unit in handling increased demands in the areas of planning and administration, media, information and technology support, outreach and liaison with stakeholders. A P-4 post is requested for a Human Rights Officer in the Complaint Procedure Unit to be responsible for the supervision and oversight of the operation of the complaint procedure, including interaction with external stakeholders, as well as liaison with other branches and divisions of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). **The Advisory Committee recommends approval of the five additional posts and the non-post resources requested.**

3. Section 27, Public information

17. Estimated additional resource requirements under section 27, Public information, amount to $190,700 for the biennium 2006-2007 and $1,356,800 for 2008-2009. It is proposed to absorb the additional requirements for 2006-2007, all of which are related to press, radio, television and photographic coverage of the additional weeks of meetings of the Human Rights Council, within the resources available under section 27, to be reported in the context of the second performance report. For 2008-2009, an estimated $381,400 is required for such coverage of Council meetings. However, most of the additional requirements relate to provision for webcast transmission on a regular basis of all regular and special sessions of the Council ($975,400).

18. As noted in paragraph 41 of the report of the Secretary-General, at the request of the Human Rights Council, UN Webcast, in coordination with the United Nations Information Service at Geneva, provided live and on-demand webcast coverage of the three regular sessions and fourth special session of the Council, held in Geneva in 2006. The cost of the webcasting was met through a combination of existing resources of OHCHR, the Division of Administration, the United Nations Office at Geneva and the Department of Public Information, and a voluntary contribution. The Advisory Committee was informed that extrabudgetary contributions had been made available for the continuation of webcasting until the end of 2007.

19. In paragraph 46 of his report, the Secretary-General describes options for handling the request made by the Human Rights Council for the continuation of webcasting in 2008-2009. The establishment of a permanent capacity at the Palais des Nations is expected to be the most practical and cost-effective in the long term, assuming that there is an expansion of the webcast delivery system at Headquarters. However, it is proposed that the implementation of that option be delayed until the biennium 2010-2011 owing to the current evolution in the television broadcast industry, which has mandated changes beginning in 2009. Furthermore, it is proposed that a study be undertaken during 2008 to determine the exact television requirements for Geneva and accurate costing for a permanent solution that would include high-definition cameras and systems and that the requirements be considered in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011. In the interim, the option of continuation of temporary capacity for webcast operation is the recommended approach. This would involve a Webcast Producer and a Webcast Officer, both stationed at Headquarters, who would travel to Geneva to cover Council meetings. The requirements for the continuation of temporary capacity and the study to determine the permanent capacity parameters are estimated at $975,400 for 2008-2009.

20. Upon request, the Advisory Committee was provided with updated projected expenditures under section 27, Public information, of the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007. The revised appropriation amounted to $178,851,800, while the proposed final appropriation is $170,964,700, resulting in savings of $7,887,100. The Committee notes that in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 (see A/62/6 (Sect. 27)), the Secretary-General estimates requirements for section 27 at $179,349,000 (before recosting), which represents a marginal increase over the revised appropriation for 2006-2007. **The Committee notes the additional activities proposed under section 27, as described in the report of the Secretary-General, and the pragmatic approach being taken to the requirement for webcasting for the Human Rights Council. However, taking into account the overall expenditure pattern under section 27 for the current biennium, the Committee is of the opinion that no net additional resource requirements should arise under section 27 for the biennium 2008-2009.**

4. Section 28E, Administration, Geneva

21. Additional requirements under section 28E in respect of contractual services, temporary assistance for meetings and general operating expenses relating to the servicing of an additional 10 weeks of meetings per year of the Human Rights Council are estimated at $291,600 for the biennium 2006-2007 and $952,100 for the biennium 2008-2009. The additional requirements for 2006-2007 are proposed to be met from within available resources, with actual expenditure to be reported in the

context of the second performance report for the biennium 2006-2007. The Committee notes that in the second performance report, reduced requirements of $348,400 are reported for section 28E (see A/62/575, schedule 1).

22. For 2008-2009, estimated additional requirements of $952,100 relate to the following: (a) contractual services for sound technicians ($67,600); (b) temporary assistance for meetings to provide security services for meetings, messenger services and an information technology assistant ($397,800); (c) contractual services for support technicians ($72,500); (d) common support costs for the proposed net 15 posts proposed under sections 2 and 23 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 ($414,200).

23. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, based on the latest understanding by the United Nations Office at Geneva that, in fact, no rental of extra space would be required, the amount of $298,400 for the cost of premises for 15 new posts would not be required. Therefore, the estimates for common support costs could be reduced by $298,400. **Moreover, as regards the remaining estimated additional requirements under section 28E, the Committee is of the opinion that no net additional requirements should arise for the biennium 2008-2009.**

B. Unforeseen and extraordinary expenses arising from the implementation of decisions of the Human Rights Council

24. In paragraphs 61 to 65 of his report, the Secretary-General makes a case for the inclusion in the biennial resolution on unforeseen and extraordinary expenses of a new paragraph authorizing the Secretary-General, subject to the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, to enter into commitments of up to $2 million during a biennium to meet unforeseen and extraordinary expenses arising from human rights measures. The Secretary-General argues that unforeseen expenses for missions of inquiry in the area of human rights under the regular budget have amounted to more than $2 million in the bienniums 2004-2005 and 2006-2007 and that, since human rights activities require urgent and timely action, it would not be appropriate to rely on extrabudgetary resources for their financing. The provision would finance the deployment of approximately four special missions mandated by the Council. The Secretary-General further states that it has been possible to accommodate new requirements within the level of resources approved under section 23, but that this approach is not sustainable on an ongoing basis.

25. **The Advisory Committee points out that the purpose of the provision for unforeseen and extraordinary expenses is to deal with expenditures for which no provision has been made in the approved regular budget. If, on the basis of the practice of the last two bienniums, there is recurrent need for special missions in the area of human rights, then, in the interest of budgetary transparency, consideration should be given to including a provision for such requirements in both the budget outline and the proposed programme budget, akin to that used for special political missions. In the meantime, requirements for 2008-2009 relating to special human rights missions should continue to be treated as they have been in the past, that is, they should be accommodated from within the level of resources approved for the biennium 2008-2009 under section 23 and reported in the context of the performance report.**

III. Conclusion

26. The action to be taken by the General Assembly is set out in paragraph 70 of the report of the Secretary-General. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly approve additional requirements for the biennium 2006-2007 estimated at $4,274,400 to be met from within the approved resources available under the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 and reported in the context of the second performance report for the biennium 2006-2007, as follows: (a) $3,792,100 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management; (b) $190,700 under section 27, Public information; (c) $291,600 under section 28E, Administration, Geneva; and (d) $77,100 under section 35, Staff assessment, to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment.**

27. **Taking into account its recommendations in the paragraphs above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly approve additional resource requirements for the biennium 2008-2009 amounting to $815,000 as follows:**

(a) **A reduction of $369,200 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management;**

(b) **An increase of $1,019,700 under section 23, Human rights;**

(c) **Additional resource requirements amounting to $164,500 under section 35, Staff assessment, to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment.**

Under the procedures established by the General Assembly in its resolutions 41/213 and 42/211, these resource requirements would represent a charge against the contingency fund.

28. **As indicated in paragraphs 20 and 23 above, no net additional resource requirements should arise under sections 27 and 28E for the biennium 2008-2009.**